



December 1, 2000

Ms. Tracy B. Calabrese
Senior Assistant City Attorney
City of Houston
P.O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

OR2000-4582

Dear Ms. Calabrese:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 141748.

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for forty-nine police incident reports relating to a particular address during a specified time interval. You state that the city has released offense reports pertaining to cases that resulted in a conviction or deferred adjudication. You claim that the rest of the requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.108 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and have reviewed the information you submitted.

Section 552.108, the "law enforcement exception," provides in relevant part that "[i]nformation held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from [required public disclosure] if . . . it is information that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication[.]" Gov't Code § 552.108(a)(2). A governmental body that claims an exception to disclosure under section 552.108 must reasonably explain, if the responsive information does not do so on its face, how and why section 552.108 is applicable. *See Ex parte Pruitt*, 551 S.W.2d 706 (Tex. 1977); Open Records Decision No. 434 at 2-3 (1986). Section 552.108(a)(2) protects information relating to a closed investigation or prosecution that did not result in a conviction or deferred adjudication. *See* Open Records Decision No. 216 (1978) (addressing applicability of statutory predecessor to closed cases). In this instance, we understand you to state that all of the submitted records pertain to concluded cases that did not result in a conviction or a deferred adjudication. Based on that understanding, we conclude that the submitted records are excepted from disclosure under section 552.108(a)(2).

We note, however, that section 552.108 does not except from disclosure “basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime.” Gov’t Code § 552.108(c). Section 552.108(c) refers to the basic front-page information held to be public in *Houston Chronicle Publishing Company v. City of Houston*, 531 S.W.2d 177 (Tex. Civ. App.--Houston [14th Dist.] 1975), *writ ref’d n.r.e. per curiam*, 536 S.W.2d 559 (Tex. 1976). Section 552.108(c) requires the release of basic front-page offense and arrest report information, including a detailed description of the alleged offense, even if that information is not literally located on the front page of a corresponding police report. *See Houston Chronicle*, 531 S.W.2d at 186-87; Open Records Decision No. 127 (1976) (summarizing the types of information deemed public by *Houston Chronicle*). The city may withhold the rest of the information in question under section 552.108(a)(2).

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov’t Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

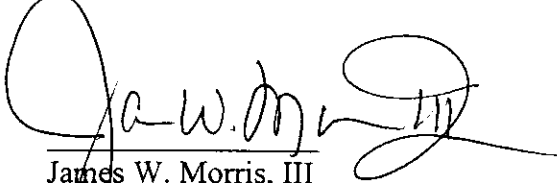
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body’s intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the General Services Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James W. Morris, III". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a stylized "M".

James W. Morris, III
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JWM/er

Ref: ID# 141748

Encl: Submitted documents

cc: Ms. Leslie Mullen, Paralegal
Greenberg, Peden, Siegmyer, Oshman,
Tigner, Geddie, Snyder & Naylor, P.C.
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(w/o enclosures)